

question, the Administrator (or his delegate) shall give notice of a tentative decision on the request at the time the notice of the draft permit is prepared as specified in § 124.10, unless this would significantly delay the processing of the permit. In that case the processing of the variance request may be separated from the permit in accordance with paragraph (a)(3) of this section, and the processing of the permit shall proceed without delay.

(ii) If, at the time, that a request for a variance under sections 301(c) or 302(b)(2) of the CWA is submitted, the Regional Administrator has received an application under § 124.3 for issuance or renewal of that permit, but has not yet prepared a draft permit under § 124.6 covering the discharge in question, the Regional Administrator, after obtaining any necessary concurrence of the EPA Deputy Assistant Administrator for Water Enforcement under § 124.62, shall give notice of a tentative decision on the request at the time the notice of the draft permit is prepared as specified in § 124.10, unless this would significantly delay the processing of the permit. In that case the processing of the variance request may be separated from the permit in accordance with paragraph (a)(3) of this section, and the processing of the permit shall proceed without delay.

(2) If, at the time that a request for a variance is filed the Regional Administrator has given notice under § 124.10 of a draft permit covering the discharge in question, but that permit has not yet become final, administrative proceedings concerning that permit may be stayed and the Regional Administrator shall prepare a new draft permit including a tentative decision on the request, and the fact sheet required by § 124.8. However, if this will significantly delay the processing of the existing draft permit or the Regional Administrator, for other reasons, considers combining the variance request and the existing draft permit inadvisable, the request may be separated from the permit in accordance with paragraph (a)(3) of this section, and the administrative disposition of the existing draft permit shall proceed without delay.

(3) If the permit has become final and no application under § 124.3 concerning it is pending or if the variance request has been separated from a draft permit as described in paragraphs (a) (1) and (2) of this section, the Regional Administrator may prepare a new draft permit and give notice of it under § 124.10. This draft permit shall be accompanied by the fact sheet required by § 124.8 except that the only matters considered shall relate to the requested variance.

[48 FR 14264, Apr. 1, 1983, as amended at 51 FR 16030, Apr. 30, 1986]

§ 124.64 Appeals of variances.

(a) When a State issues a permit on which EPA has made a variance decision, separate appeals of the State permit and of the EPA variance decision are possible. If the owner or operator is challenging the same issues in both proceedings, the Regional Administrator will decide, in consultation with State officials, which case will be heard first.

(b) Variance decisions made by EPA may be appealed under either subpart E or F, provided the requirements of the applicable subpart are met. However, whenever the basic permit decision is eligible only for an evidentiary hearing under subpart E while the variance decision is eligible only for a panel hearing under subpart F, the issues relating to both the basic permit decision and the variance decision shall be considered in the subpart E proceeding. No subpart F hearing may be held if a subpart E hearing would be held in addition. See § 124.111(b).

(c) *Stays for section 301(g) variances.* If a request for an evidentiary hearing is granted on a variance requested under CWA section 301(g), or if a petition for review of the denial of a request for the hearing is filed under § 124.91, any otherwise applicable standards and limitations under CWA section 301 shall not be stayed unless:

(1) In the judgment of the Regional Administrator, the stay or the variance sought will not result in the discharge of pollutants in quantities which may reasonably be anticipated to pose an unacceptable risk to human health or the environment because of bioaccumulation, persistency in the

environment, acute toxicity, chronic toxicity, or synergistic propensities; and

(2) In the judgment of the Regional Administrator, there is a substantial likelihood that the discharger will succeed on the merits of its appeal; and

(3) The discharger files a bond or other appropriate security which is required by the Regional Administrator to assure timely compliance with the requirements from which a variance is sought in the event that the appeal is unsuccessful.

(d) Stays for variances other than section 301(g) are governed by § 124.60.

§ 124.65 [Reserved]

§ 124.66 Special procedures for decisions on thermal variances under section 316(a).

(a) Except as provided in § 124.65, the only issues connected with issuance of a particular permit on which EPA will make a final Agency decision before the final permit is issued under §§ 124.15 and 124.60 are whether alternative effluent limitations would be justified under CWA section 316(a) and whether cooling water intake structures will use the best available technology under section 316(b). Permit applicants who wish an early decision on these issues should request it and furnish supporting reasons at the time their permit applications are filed under § 122.21. The Regional Administrator will then decide whether or not to make an early decision. If it is granted, both the early decision on CWA section 316 (a) or (b) issues and the grant of the balance of the permit shall be considered permit issuance under these regulations, and shall be subject to the same requirements of public notice and comment and the same opportunity for an evidentiary or panel hearing under subpart E or F.

(b) If the Regional Administrator, on review of the administrative record, determines that the information necessary to decide whether or not the CWA section 316(a) issue is not likely to be available in time for a decision on permit issuance, the Regional Administrator may issue a permit under § 124.15 for a term up to 5 years. This permit shall require achievement of the effluent limitations initially pro-

posed for the thermal component of the discharge no later than the date otherwise required by law. However, the permit shall also afford the permittee an opportunity to file a demonstration under CWA section 316(a) after conducting such studies as are required under 40 CFR part 125, subpart H. A new discharger may not exceed the thermal effluent limitation which is initially proposed unless and until its CWA section 316(a) variance request is finally approved.

(c) Any proceeding held under paragraph (a) of this section shall be publicly noticed as required by § 124.10 and shall be conducted at a time allowing the permittee to take necessary measures to meet the final compliance date in the event its request for modification of thermal limits is denied.

(d) Whenever the Regional Administrator defers the decision under CWA section 316(a), any decision under section 316(b) may be deferred.

Subpart E—Evidentiary Hearings for EPA-Issued NPDES Permits and EPA-Terminated RCRA Permits

§ 124.71 Applicability.

(a) The regulations in this subpart govern all formal hearings conducted by EPA under CWA sections 402 and 405(f), except those conducted under subpart F. They also govern all evidentiary hearings conducted under RCRA section 3008 in connection with the termination of a RCRA permit. This includes termination of interim status for failure to furnish information needed to make a final decision. A formal hearing is available to challenge any NPDES permit issued under § 124.15 except for a general permit. Persons affected by a general permit may not challenge the conditions of a general permit as of right in further agency proceedings. They may instead either challenge the general permit in court, or apply for an individual NPDES permit under § 122.21 as authorized in § 122.28 and then request a formal hearing on the issuance or denial of an individual permit. (The Regional Administrator also has the discretion to use the procedures of subpart F for general permits. See § 124.111).